Morphosyntax as Syntax Proper

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In this presentation I will introduce data from the Pazar Dialect of Laz (South Caucasian/Kartvelian) that on the surface seems to exhibit a slot-based morphology: In a morphological system that exhibits agreement with both the subject and the object, a prefix slot can realize either a first person subject or a second person object, but – albeit semantically and syntactically possible – never both, suggesting a hierarchy of realization that is specific to this prefixal slot.

(1) \[ ma \ v-uk'ap'-i \]

1SG 1A-run-L.PST

‘I ran.’

(2) \[ him-uk si ko-g-dzir-u \]

3SG-ERG 2SG PV-2P-find-3.PST

‘You sg found me.’

(3) \[ ma si ko-(v)-g-dzir-i \]

1SG 2SG PV-(1A)-2P-find-L.PST

‘I found you sg.’

I will show that an analysis in the spirit of Nanosyntax (cf. Starke (2009)), i.e. one based on constituency and a superset approach to cyclical realization is capable of deriving the surface facts without any arbitrary stipulations along the lines of slots, hierarchies, or the more abstract tools of merge, and fission as utilized by Distributed Morphology (Halle & Marantz, 1993). In fact the only tool needed is already provided by syntax proper: The (timing) distinction between internal and external arguments, i.e. internal arguments are merged before external ones and thus can agree earlier.

Selected References


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Glossing: Prefixes: A (subject agreement), P (object agreement). Suffixes: Encode only features of the subject (third person or local) and will thus simply be glossed 3 and l. respectively.